

Case Study Week 3

School-based teacher development: an example from Tanzania

A group of university lecturers were interested in how teachers can be supported in making their teaching more learner-centred. A small secondary school agreed to take part in the study. The head teacher decided to focus on the Mathematics department and the three maths teachers in the school agreed to take part.

The teachers formed a 'learning study group'. First, they met with the researchers and together they discussed their understandings of learner-centred education. The researchers shared some of the theoretical understandings (knowledge for practice) and the teachers shared information about their context, the curriculum and their learners (knowledge of practice). Working together, they planned some classroom activities for the teachers to try in their classrooms.

Having tried the activities, the teachers met together and discussed their reflections on the activities and how they had been experienced by the learners. During this reflective meeting, they used what they had learnt to plan more activities.

The researchers observed some of the lessons and the reflective meetings. The teachers also shared their notebooks, in which they had written down their reflections immediately after they had tried the activities.

The research team found that during this time, the teachers reinvigorated their teaching practices for the better. Their understanding of LCE changed. They stopped thinking of it as a particular teaching method and started to focus more carefully on their learners and how they experienced the lesson. Their 'knowledge in practice' (the decisions they make 'in the moment' to improve the lesson) developed through this approach.

The researcher also realised that because they had created a non-threatening environment in which teachers collaborated and shared their experiences, the teachers had been honest in how they viewed the power dynamics in the classroom and about the impact of their teaching. Also, they had been open to new ideas.

They research team concluded that:

'The TPD program potentially has the capacity of changing teachers' beliefs from a naive understanding of student-centered instruction as using participatory methods (with no tangible fruits on the ground) to a professional understanding as making critical features of the "object of learning" accessible to the students. Arguably, the professional development program teachers underwent in this study is useful in implementing teaching practice and changing educational interventions necessary to enhance student achievement (p152)'.

Adapted from: Msonde, S.E., Msonde, C.E., 2019. Re-Innovation of Learner-Centered Pedagogy in Tanzania's Secondary Schools. *Journal of Education* 199, 142–154.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0022057419854343>